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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Tides Center, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Today, women represent 70 per cent of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty throughout the world. Inequality, with respect to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, is a central fact of women's lives in every region of the world and is a result of discrimination against women and women's lower status within patriarchal societies. In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals aimed at advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, it is critical for the nations of the world to promote and reflect a human rights perspective that embraces women's human rights as fundamental to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Ten years after the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, women continue to lag behind men on most development indicators. While the global economic crisis has prevented some progress in terms of development, even here the impacts will disproportionately burden women. If gender equality and the empowerment of women, crucial to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, are to be achieved, States must urgently prioritize the fulfilment of women's economic and social rights. It is the realization of rights that holds the key to development, by creating the space for women to claim and assert basic needs in terms of State's obligations and not simply as inspirational benchmarks. In order to make the most significant and meaningful inroads in addressing the perpetuation of discrimination against women, and its continuing role in reinforcing women's poverty, it is critical to continue to underscore the need for legal recognition of the rights to substantive equality and non-discrimination, particularly in relation to economic and social rights. True and sustainable development will only be achieved when human rights principles, norms and standards are upheld as a matter of course for everyone, including women. In particular, in order for women's human rights to be upheld, States must be called upon to meet their legal obligations under such international human rights treaties as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The successful implementation of both of these treaties is the key to the effective realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international human rights standards, Governments around the world are obligated to ensure that women's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. In order to do this, Governments must strengthen national legal protections for women's economic, social and cultural rights, and do so on the basis of non-discrimination and equality, allowing women to participate meaningfully in the process. The existing international legal framework provides an important tool for accountability and for measuring the extent and adequacy of implementation of these goals. Recognizing the critical links that exist between women's economic, social and cultural rights and women's equality is the key to improving the lives of women all around the world and to realizing the crucial benchmarks included in the Millennium Development Goals.